

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

February 6, 2018

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

1. I'd like to ask about future initiatives. Are we planning to add more or are we going to be allowed to get really good at what we've started? Example being: Guided Reading. Are we going to delve deeper into the Literacy Continuum that all elementary reading teachers received or are we moving on to something else even though we've barely scratched the surface of this resource? Are we going to focus on mathematics in the same manner next year?
 - A. Yes, the focus for 2018–19 will continue to be on literacy. We will specifically focus on building a culture of reading, writing, thinking and discussing with a continued emphasis on guided reading, reading strategies and vocabulary. The Literacy Continuum by Fountas and Pinnell will be used in professional learning for the different aspects of the Reading and Writing Workshop. In addition, the emphasis in 2018–19 for math and the other content areas will be as it relates to literacy: reading, writing, thinking, and discussing.
2. The teachers do not like doing attendance at 10:00. We know this is not a Birdville rule because other districts are doing this also. **Did this come from TEA?** We'd like to know who to write to so that we can at least let them know that this is disruptive to instruction. Teachers are having to stop teaching in the middle of a lesson, walk over to the computer, and put in attendance.
 - A. The rules regarding attendance are determined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and included in the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH), revised on an annual basis. These rules are also modified by TEA auditors' interpretation of this section, which has become more stringent in recent years.

The SAAH states that “each campus must determine attendance for all grades by the absences recorded at the one particular point in time the campus has chosen for roll to be taken during the second or fifth instructional hour of the day or its equivalent. The selected time may vary from campus to campus within your district. However, once a time has been selected, a campus must not change it during the school year.”

It was important to find a time at each level to ensure students arriving late were counted present but prior to lunch periods when students were not in their assigned classrooms. Central Administration finalized the times with input from campus administrators. While the times may not always be the most convenient for teachers, they represent the optimum times for the most students to be in attendance at their respective campus level.

Districts failing to record attendance at the allotted time risk loss of state funding. Our District currently earns around \$36 per student, per day, for a student in attendance.

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Binion

3. Would it be possible for our paychecks to come on the 15th of the month so that we do not have any long pay periods like we do in January?
 - A. Districts have traditionally set their monthly payroll pay dates on the 25th to coincide with the monthly state funding payment from the Texas Education Agency. These state aid payments provide the cash flow for districts to cover the monthly payroll expenses. In addition, the monthly payroll check covers hours worked during that month. Moving the payroll earlier in the month would cause the District to prepay salaries in many cases. Prepaying salaries is considered a gift of public funds, prohibited by State law.

Hardeman

4. **Is there any way for payroll to work out an arrangement for ASPIRE so that EAs can continue to work ASPIRE?** Other hourly employees are allowed to work outside of their school hours, and are paid from other funds, so why can't that same program work for EAs and ASPIRE. It is very difficult to run an ASPIRE program without these employees helping out because they typically know the campus, students, and families. For example, some employees who are hourly are paid to work athletic events and that is allowed because one is paid from their regular payroll and the athletic event is paid as a fee for each event.
 - A. The ASPIRE federal grant does not allow the payment of overtime. Because EAs are paid for 40 hours in their regular position, all time worked by them for ASPIRE creates overtime and is not allowable under the grant guidelines. The Fair Labor Standards Act requires non-exempt employees to be paid at 1.5 times their hourly rate for time worked over 40 hours in a similar position. In this case, the ASPIRE program is considered similar to their EA position. In the case of athletic events, the duties required are not considered similar to the EA position based on guidance from our attorneys. Therefore, we are not obligated to pay overtime.

Smith

5. It appears that the property on Haltom Road between the water tower and Haltom High School is being developed. **What will be built there? If it is for single or multiple family housing, how will the increase in student population be addressed?**
 - A. Single family homes will be built in the area south of Haltom High School. We do not know the full impact on our schools yet. Many of the higher-end housing additions do not draw in young families, but more established professionals that either do not have children or have an empty nest. We will have a new demographer report in the next few months. They will be able to provide projections for us.

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Smithfield

6. With the heavy focus on literacy throughout all subjects, we have been able to improve our skills and refine our methods. With that said, there is still room for improvement and sustained focus. **Will the district continue their Literacy Initiative next year to allow for this continued improvement before moving on to the next area of focus?**
- A. Yes, the focus for 2018–19 will continue to be on literacy. We will specifically focus on building a culture of reading, writing, thinking and discussing with a continued emphasis on guided reading, reading strategies and vocabulary.
7. The math curriculum documents are filled with resources that work to supplement the Go Math series such as GPS, Engaging Math and ESC lessons along with other STAAR preparation materials. Additional materials and resources are needed to ensure that the curriculum and skills are being spiraled. **Will the district be looking to adopt a more inclusive resource that includes spiraling like previous series did?**
- A. Unfortunately, the next math adoption cycle does not begin until the fall of 2023 with materials being ordered in the spring of 2024 and implemented in the fall of the 2024–25 school year. During the next adoption cycle for math, materials will be closely examined to determine the appropriate resources required to meet our students’ diverse needs. Input from teachers will be important in the process. Until that time, the Teaching and Learning math department will be working with curriculum writing teams to make recommendations for additional resources to supplement the current adoption.

Snow Heights

8. **With the district focus on eradicating illiteracy . . . would it be possible to employ full-time librarians at each campus?** Librarians, and the opportunity for children to come to the library frequently ensure that we are providing opportunities for access, volume and choice in reading.
- A. We will continue to identify ways to fund critical literary positions such as librarians at each campus. Effective staffing is essential to address the many needs of our students and the Human Resources and Teaching and Learning departments will work with campus principals to try and address these needs.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

Watauga

- 9. Is it possible for the district to have a schedule for the shredding program?** I would like to see the shredding program have a gentleman or two set up a schedule to come to the schools and pick up the boxes to be shredded instead of having the secretaries/teachers have to deliver it. If a schedule was set up, they could have the proper equipment to use dollies to take the boxes away and by using a van could pick up from two schools at a time and then within the day maybe have a total eight and therefore could get to every school before the end of the month/deadline when it needs to be delivered for the shredding company. There is limited parking at TIMS and only a few small dollies so you might have several people trying to accomplish this task at the same time. With a schedule in place we might be able to have the shredding done more than once a year so that the amount of paper that is having to be kept is not as much as if it was done only once a year.
- A. The Technology and Purchasing departments have been working together all year to create a new document retention and disposal process. Once implemented, the entire process will change. Storage and disposal of documents will move to the district warehouse and Purchasing will set up a schedule for document pickup. Watch for information about the implementation of this new program in the spring.

HIGH SCHOOL

Haltom

- 10. Why did we do away with the 2nd half day before Christmas break?** It seemed hard on students and teachers to have 3 semester exams along with all other classes in one day on that Thursday. Those testing periods were also only 70 minutes long as opposed to the 2-hour testing periods on Friday and students were having difficulty completing their exams. Can we bring that second half day back?
- A. In discussions with secondary administration and the Calendar Committee it was determined that campuses could modify a full day schedule to allow two-hour testing periods. To maximize valuable instruction time it is recommended that the first semester contain one half day at the end of the first semester but continue the practice of two half days at the end of the school year.
- 11. We have seen numbers of SPED students increase drastically. Some of our inclusion classes have over 50 percent SPED, and we have limited inclusion co-teachers. Some classes are assigned an EA instead of a certified SPED teacher. When will we evaluate those numbers and prepare for them, by adding additional staff for inclusion & resource classes?** Meeting the needs of SPED students is of utmost concern and that is difficult with such large class sizes and limited manpower within SPED.

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HIGH SCHOOL (continued)

Haltom (continued)

- A. The Special Education staffing plan for high school co-teach/resource is based on a weighted formula that is based on student need (the higher the IA code of a student the more weight that is given to that student). The total weighted student count is then divided by 30 to determine the number of co-teach FTEs a high school campus needs. Currently Haltom High School is staffed with 11 FTEs for co-teach/resource. These 11 FTEs would be able to cover 66 sections of co-teach/resource.

A recommendation from the Special Education Department has been submitted to increase SPED staffing and will be evaluated this spring.

Additional Questions

1. Can they push the Skyward app to the teacher iPads for them to take attendance?

- A. The Skyward app is not installed by default, but it is readily available in the BISD app catalog and takes about a minute to install. Last week alone we had 602 teachers use the skyward app from mobile devices.

At this time, the mobile device management tool does not differentiate between teachers, para-professionals, administrators or other users. Pushing the app to teachers would also push it to all other staff, and doing so would take up storage space on the devices.

2. Supplemental response to Question 3 (above) from Binion:

- A. In speaking with a few area districts, we found various payroll dates: 25th, 20th, semi-monthly, and end of the month. The District paying on the 20th did not recommend that early date. It created issues with overpayments when employees left the District. As I mentioned earlier, the monthly payroll currently coincides with our monthly state funding payment. This allows the needed cash flow for payroll needs which exceeds \$13 million each month. The early payments in both November and December are provided as a courtesy to our employees. Those payments could easily be held until the 25th to shorten the time between the December and January pay dates.

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3. **Supplemental question and response related to Question #4 above re ASPIRE:** It is difficult for Hardeman to get support staff to work. Do they have any other options?
 - A. The only other option would be for the campus to pay the overtime from their campus site-based budget.

4. **Supplemental response to Question #9 above: Can we get an update on BISD's shredding program?**
 - A. The Technology and Purchasing departments are finalizing the details for a new document retention process and expect to have the details released before spring break. The new process will involve document retention schedules that are document specific with important documents being sent to a document retention facility at the warehouse for appropriate storage and/or destruction.

5. **Supplemental response to Question #10 above regarding reviewing the schedules for the full/half days before the break in December.**
 - A. This year, because of only having one half day before the holiday break, principals, in setting up the exam schedule, had a 70-minute exam in the morning and an 85-minute exam in the afternoon. The 85-minute exam kept with past practice so that the teachers would have 15 minutes of review time before starting the exam. The principals will be redesigning the exam schedule for next December to give equal time for review and the exam on the full days as they have done in the past since we had to administer three exams in one day due to not having the additional half day that we have done in the past. The exam time for the half day was kept at the time specified in prior years (90 minutes for the test and 25 minutes for the review) since we can only schedule two exams on the half day.

6. **Supplemental response to Question #11 above:** They are sharing an EA between two teachers. One gets the EA on MWF and the other on TTH. This is a problem. (HHS)
 - A. Response from David Hamilton, HHS principal: In some non-EOC-tested areas, we have an EA assist teachers on an every other day basis. The students who are Special Education students in these classes require a certain number of minutes of assistance per week. This can be achieved by the EAs with this type of schedule.